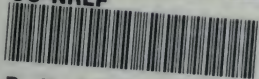


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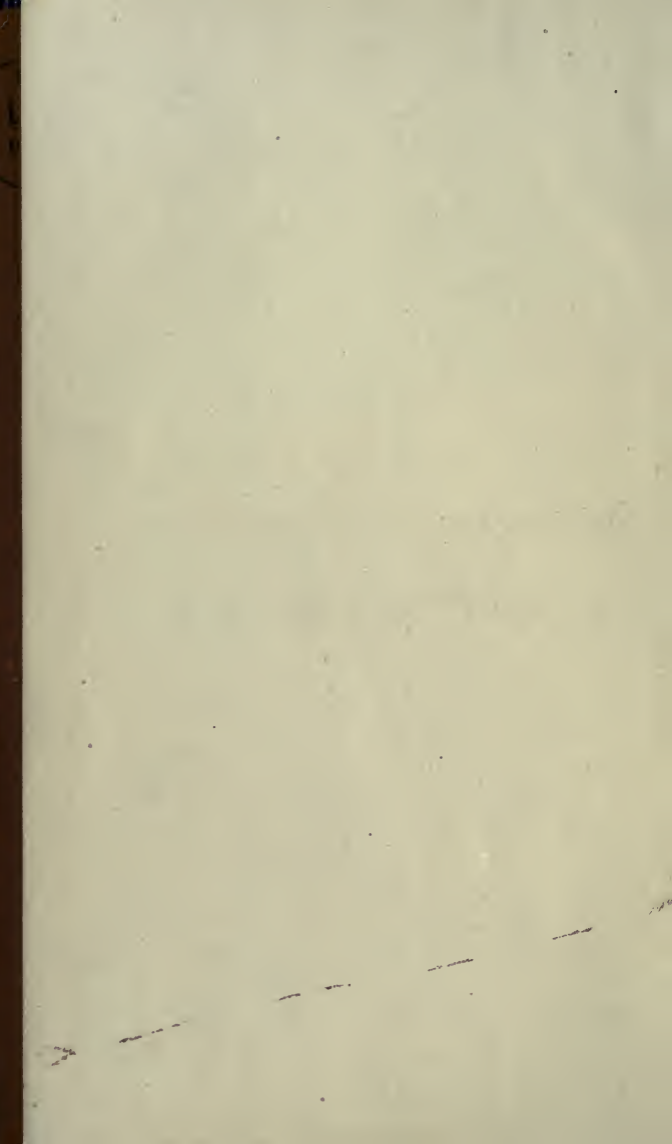
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THE END
OF THE
PILGRIMAGE



THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE,

AND OTHER POEMS.



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THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

ELIZABETH MARY PARSONS.

LONDON:

CHARLES WESTERTON,

PUBLISHER,

ST. GEORGE'S PLACE, HYDE PARK CORNER.

1859.

LOAN STACK

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
The End of the Pilgrimage	5
Gathering Flowers	15
To my Eldest Sister, on the Anniversary of her Birthday	17
The Old Year, 1857	21
Thought	31
An Old Man's Tale	33
Verses suggested by Sermons on the Ministry of the Angels	41
The Lamp	49
The Weary Hour	53
A Country Church	57
Twilight	63
Words of Strife	79
Change	85
Farewell	95

THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE.



“ WITH bruised feet and aching head
“ I lay me down and die ;

“ For I am weary of my life,

“ And thankful here to lie.

“ More weary than the ailing child

“ That seeks its mother’s breast ;

“ More stricken, hopeless, hunted down,

“ Than bird with wounded crest.

“ Life’s pilgrimage is ended here,

“ In the lone wilderness ;

“ And none for me will shed a tear

“ Or have a joy the less.

The End of the Pilgrimage.

- “ Yet farther than is North from South,
“ Be murmuring from me ;
“ Life’s lamp is flick’ring to its end,
“ Contented let me be.
- “ A stone my pillow, thorns around,
“ My staff laid by my side ;
“ The cross above, the cross below,
“ No ill can me betide.
- “ The evening closes round me,
“ Its damps bedew my brow ;
“ My wand’ring thoughts I scarce can guide,
“ Where is my loved one now ?
- “ The cross, my cross falls from my hand,
“ Now and for evermore ;
“ God’s mercy comes to me at last,
“ Life’s pilgrimage is o’er.”

“ In mercy,” gentle voices said,
For angels whispered near ;
And tenderly to Christ they bore
The soul to Him so dear.

And the poor worn-out casket, laid
Upon a foreign strand ;
Will Christians pity on it take,
And lend a helping hand ?

The sinking sun withdrew his face,
Night threw her mantle round ;
The ocean murmuring a dirge,
Moaning with heavy sound.

Its dull, deep-sighing voice, unheard
By the poor pilgrim there ;
It seemed a faithful friend in need,
Keeping lone watch with prayer.

And morning dawned upon the wild,
A quiet, sunless dawn ;
The cross received the first faint rays,
Protecting the "forlorn."

Yet earlier than the God of day,
With solemn step and slow,
Came one to whom that cross was dear,
Dearer than aught below.

And oh ! how many weary hearts
Have at its foot laid down
Burdens too heavy to be borne,
Winning thereby a crown.

What though the crown of "thorns" is made ?
It matters little here ;
Each thorn buds forth, a "peerless rose,"
In the Eternal sphere.

Tears of repentance, turn to gems
More bright than princes wear ;
The pure gold, fretted o'er with sighs,
By smiles is brightened there.

But yon grey figure by its mien
The crown of thorns must wear ;
Stooping but not with age, bent down
By suffering and care.

He little recks who lies so near,
Claiming of earth a grave ;
He little thinks that one so dear
So small a boon must crave

Of him, the thoughtless, thankless son,
Who could a mother leave,
Without a line, her heart to cheer,
And much to make her grieve.

A day of reck'ning came to him,
When fever laid him low ;
He listened for his mother's voice,
In agony and woe.

As he had sown so did he reap,
No mother's hand was near ;
Delirium wild upon him seized,
No mother shed a tear.

The church stretched forth a friendly hand,
And helped him in his need ;
And he had cause to bless her aid,
He did, and brought forth seed.

He never left the Convent's shade,
A " Brother " he became ;
Despised by many, his good deeds
Our charity might shame.

His mother still he hoped to see,
But weary weeks passed by ;
His letters all unanswered were,
His trouble mounted high.

Poor mother ! ere the news could reach
The Emerald Isle so dear,
She had set forth to seek her son,
Hoping 'gainst hope and fear.

Her sufferings are ended now ;
How great they were, none knew ;
But God, in thy great mercy, send
So sad a fate to few.

“ Mother and son,” they meet at last,
It seems in mockery sent ;
The boon so prayed for, come at last,
In form of punishment.

With fear and trembling we should ask
Favors of God for we,
Hoping to 'scape th' effects of sin,
Are blind, we cannot see

The End; or we should start aside
And shrinking, fear to face
What we have asked for, oft it lies
On edge of precipice.

Oh! what a sad, sad meeting, here
We draw a veil around;
They met, the son bent down and hid
His face upon the ground.

At eventide a solemn knell
Tolled forth from Convent near;
A brotherhood of christian monks
Were gathered round the bier.

“ God rest her soul,” they murmured all,
And then her mother earth
Ope’d wide her arms, her careworn child
Her ample folds begirth.

And many a wand’ring pilgrim
Her story loves to hear :
There is a simple cross, with words,
“ Her son too lieth here.”





GATHERING FLOWERS.



A LITTLE child was gath'ring flowers
 Upon a dewy eve,
 Hast'ning in sport from bud to bud,
 Fearing she some must leave.

But presently she seemed to fail,
 As wearied of her play,
 And sinking on a fallen tree
 The sweet child sleeping lay.

As silence fell on all around,
 A soft voice seemed to say :
 " When next God's Angel gathers flowers,
 " Beware ! beware ! sweet May."

The dews had chilled her tiny limbs,—
She started from her sleep,—
The voice that sounded in her ears,
Though neither loud nor deep,

Her life had saved; and many years
The sweet flower blossomed on,
Though others, equally beloved,
Went to their unknown "Home."

The Angel spared her long; she bent
Beneath the weight of years;
Calmly she bore the ills of life,
Watering her way with tears.

And when the Angel came his rounds,
She withered on the stem,—
She went to join the choir above,
And shine a peerless "Gem."

TO MY ELDEST SISTER, ON THE ANNI-
VERSARY OF HER BIRTHDAY.



TIME, the avenging god, is hurrying on,
And the All-powerful stays not His mighty
course ;

He can, but does not,—'tis in vain *we* try,
Mocking our efforts weak, the giant passes by :
Our prayers he heeds not, even while the breath
We use is warm, our pleading is unheard,
For he is then still further on his way.
On, on, the old, the young, even the gentle babe,
Once launched upon the stream can never stay ;
We weary and we cry for rest,—we moan
In agony,—our spirit yearns for one
Brief moment of repose—for one short interval
Of nothingness.—Vain ! vain the wish,

The prayer, all worse than vain.

* * * *

Time, the resistless, since o'er thee

Nothing has power, what are thy boons to man?

I read my answer 'mid the wild wind's sighing,

And in murmurs low it said :

“ The widow and the orphan know—ask them.

“ The father, stooping o'er the lonely grave,

“ That has in its dark keeping one

“ More loved than life, knows but too well—ask him.

“ The mother, mourning for her only son,

“ The beauteous and the brave,

“ In bitterness of heart can tell thee—ask of her.

“ Repeat the question to the lonely one,

“ Crushed by some secret grief, bowed to the earth,

“ By what? Blighted affection? Trust betrayed?

“ The richest treasures of the heart

“ Poured forth in waste? It matters little what,

“ So that the heart is wrung, almost to breaking.

“ Oh! when the wound is deep

“ It lies and festers there,—sleep brings no rest—
“ Phantoms glide by most life-like,
“ And perchance it seems to us
“ ‘That all is well.—We start, we waken,
“ And the gush of memory threatens destruction,—
“ The racked brain, tottering upon its throne,
“ Scarce tells us, that our dream was sent to show
“ That misery can be more complete than aught
“ Our wildest fancy ever painted.
“ Then ask of such a one, if memory cannot stray
“ Back to some happier hour? Ask one and all,
“ What was the boon time brought?
“ But nerve thyself to hear of naught
“ But desolation, suffering, shame and death.”
With a wild shriek the wind flew by—
It lessened in its fury, till it sunk
‘To a hoarse whisper, and then added:
“ If more thou hast a wish to learn,
“ Then ask experience—a hard task-master—
“ And he’ll teach thee, to *thy cost*.”

* * * *

Time, still upon the wing, is bearing me,
And many dear to me, upon its heaving bosom.
Trial all must expect, but all
Not in the same ratio ;—to some
Are many happy hours allotted, and to thee,
Sweet Sister, may the sum of them be great.
Many will wish thee happiness to-day,
The wish be many times re-echoed.
Kind and forbearing, in my heart thou'lt rest,
A memory sweet, and none, if more they show,
Feel more than I. And oh, may those
Who wish thee well to-day, be spared
To love thee long, till blessing and blest,
The earth can scarce bestow
On thee, Sister beloved, one blessing more.
Farewell, farewell! Accept this tribute small
From one whose only merit
Is, " A loving heart."

THE OLD YEAR, 1857.



THE Old Year fadeth from our grasp,
 He dieth silently ;
 At midnight hour he breathes his last,
 All alone, mournfully,

None around his death-bed standing,
 Watching his slow decay,
 They are to the New Year handing
 Presents both rich and gay.

And does the poor Old Year deserve
 To be neglected thus ?
 Think of the many happy hours
 He brought to all of us.

We owe him gratitude for these,
His gifts were kindly meant,
In sorrow, and in suffering too,
He wrought with good intent.

From some he took the one most loved,—
Sorrow how great to bear!
Yet better than to know they live
With heart and conscience sear.

Doubtless this heavy grief to some
Unsparingly he dealt;
And many other bitter woes
By human hearts were felt.

England must ever, looking back
In agony and shame,
Confess that for her many sins
Dread retribution came.

Reason affrighted, left her seat,
 Hope died from out the heart,
And nameless evils on us came,
 Beyond all healing art.

The gourd we planted in the East
 Withered as Jonah's did ;
The burning sun scorched all beneath,
 And God's own sons fell dead.

But let us not recount alone
 The ills that us befel,
For mercies numberless were there,
 And these record as well.

A grievous year thou'st been to some,
 But not to all, I ween,
For many looking back can say,
 " How happy I have been."

I will stay by thee, good Old Year,
Thou shalt not die alone ;
The throes of Death are coming on,
I hear thee pant and groan.

Thy numbered moments glide away,
Vain is thy prayer for aid,
I, in thy petition joining,
Though words are left unsaid.

The tide of life is ebbing fast,
Rest, rest thy weary head :
At rest it is, oh ! good Old Year,
Oh ! poor Old Year thou'rt dead.



PART II.

I'm list'ning to the merry bells,
They chime with heart and will ;
The heir is come, another year
Old Time has giv'n us still.

And thoughtlessly they rush to meet
And greet the coming year ;
Hail him with gifts, his health they drink,
And crown him with good cheer.

Sweet bells ! so merrily they sound,
I love their melody ;
Their voices so harmonious, blend
With my thoughts soothingly.

I cannot haste the heir to meet,
So soon, so very soon ;
The closing scene is scarcely o'er,
My soul is out of tune.

But thy sweet chimings still I love,
My solitude they cheer ;
And naught their music interferes
With thoughts of the Old Year.

How tenderly he cherished some,
And decked their brows with flow'rs ;
And wreathed with loving hearts their lives,
And gave them golden hours.

Youth, health, and beauty, gifts how bright !
From his full hand he gave ;
Triumphantly he shed around
All they most wished to have.

So gratefully and tenderly

We'll say, " Good-bye, Old Year ;"

For sorrow and for happiness

We thank thee with a tear.

For happiness should ever be

Received with trembling heart ;

Impending ruin o'er it hangs,

Our sweetest joys depart.

And when the cloud of sorrow drops

Its sable shroud, between

Us and the hopes we'd garnered up,

And nothing can be seen

But darkness palpable and thick,

As the Egyptians saw ;

Cease thy lamenting, brighter days

There are for thee in store.

So quickly in our changing life
Our cares are laid aside,
The heaviest grief we have to bear
Will not for aye abide.

The Old Year brought us much of good,
The New will do the same ;
And moaning in the distance now
Grief will make sure its claim.

For good and ill alike prepare
And do the thing that's right ;
Bury the evil thou hast done
During the Old Year's flight.

Its precious moments fled by
Gone are its hopes and fears ;
It lies a wreck of what has been
With other bygone years.

Each one a warning is to us,
 Beck'ning with solemn hand ;
Beseeching us our house to build,
 But not upon the sand.

Each year a seed-time has, keep watch
 And let it not pass by ;
Each year a harvest has, beware !
 Nor spend it heedlessly.

Farewell ! Old Year, around thy brow
 An ivy wreath I twine ;
'Twere cruelty to call thee back,
 Thou art no longer mine.

And as the chiming ceases now,
 My heart shall still its moan :
Welcome ! New Year, I trust my fate,
 To me, to thee unknown.

I leave it in the hands of One
Who doeth all things well ;
His grace, His truth, His love for us,
Eternity shall tell.

And when the Reaper gathers in
His sheaves from far and near ;
May I amongst the wheat be found
And all whom I hold dear.



THOUGHT.



THOUGHT! busy, restless, anxious thought,
 When will thy ceaseless wave be stayed?

Oh! foolish question, yet how like mankind
 To call thee ceaseless, and then ask of thee
 How many weary hours must pass
 Ere thou art still? Yet one thing more
 I ask of thee, What art thou? and why dost come
 Uncalled for, uninvited? Coming alike to all:
 No courtly guest art thou, the weary think;
 Thou art no stranger to the wretched;
 And the guilty curse thee for thy hateful company.
 Vast and illimitable, beyond compare,
 A god' with power omnipotent to raise
 Or crush the drooping heart. And wilt thou,

Proud as thou must be of thy dominion—
Wilt deal more gently than it is thy wont
With one whose heart is early dimmed by care?
Give me sweet images, and rest my weary soul.
My only hope is rest : oh ! give it me, and let
My thankful blessing rest on thy hydra form.



AN OLD MAN'S TALE.



I'VE heard a tale, a strange old tale it is,
 But true or not, as I remember, so will I
 Relate it: the truth methinks is often stranger than,
 Fearing ridicule, we dare acknowledge;
 But to an old man like me, it matters not
 Or ridicule or praise, 'tis as you will;
 So to my task. 'Tis many years ago
 That a young man whom I knew well,
 Too well, loved a sweet girl of my acquaintance;
 Not as some love, believe me: no, with his whole being;
 Strong in passion and affection, he surrendered
 To her keeping every hope that bound him to a future,
 For happiness or misery. Oh! his was love!

My old heart leaps again to think of it.
And she, bless her young heart 'twas sad !
She loved him too, I do not doubt it now
Though once I did ; but there were busy tongues
And they make mischief, (an old man's
Malediction rest upon them!) and then all went wrong.
The young man's heart was wroth,
Long nights of weeping, and long days
Of weariness, fretted his life away.
She noted altered looks, as I've heard tell,
And fretted to, and then 'twas hinted to him
That she fretted, being bound to him unwillingly ;
And he,—and he,—no, pause a moment :
It was I, I did it, I am he ;
'Twas in my misery, I was wild with grief,
I had no wish to tie her young life down to mine
And she unwilling, so I told her I must leave
For my health's sake ; (I did it for the best ;)
I went, not many miles away, but far enough,

My presence I believed a pain to her
And I withdrew it. After a time they told her
She was free, made free by death, and as my last words
Said, "I wished her well and loved her to the end."
And so I did, and do and ever shall. So when
They finished, waiting for an answer, she had naught
to say,

Which frightened them, and this continued
How long I know not; but in time they saw
How false it was to say her vows were mine
Unwillingly, and then they wrote to me.
Oh! for the happiness within my reach, no more
Could doubt come stealthily between us,
I knew her for my own in heart,
And travelling with speed to claim her, I arrived—
What a bright life before me!—I stepped in.
I would delay the sequel if I could, but cannot;
Years have not obliterated or softened down the
Fearful agony which succeeded my short dream

Of bliss : on seeing me she started forward
With the words, " They told me he was dead,"
Then staggered back upon her seat, a maniac !
I soothed her with kind words, with gentle offices,
But all in vain. Summer faded to Autumn,
Autumn winds sighed by, stern Winter came,
Spring breathed again upon the face of Nature,
Still there was no change in her I loved ;
Again and once again the seasons wearied on,
And then the old physician whispered me
That when the violets drooped, she too would fade,
And restlessly I watched for one brief interval
Of reason. It came, perhaps vouchsafed to me
In answer to my broken-hearted prayers.
We understood each other then, too late, alas !
She saw my fatal error, pitied, and forgave it,
Soothed my distraction with her loving voice,
And as a parting gift, bequeathed to me
The likeness of my miserable self, which she

Had treasured ; with some lines attached
Of her own composition : she reminded me
(I needed no reminder) of the time when
She had said, " that I should live to know
" The deep affection which she bore for me
" And prize it." And my answer then had been,
" That if such knowledge ever came to me,
" 'Twould be the brightest day in my life's history."
Yet so it was not, could not be, the truth had shone
Upon my heart, contrasting with the thickness
Of the fearful darkness, that henceforth
Must settle on my soul. She died.
So beautiful, and true, and loving ; everything
She thought could solace me she had said,
In hopefulness of a reunion in a better world,—
My loved, my lost one ! When she died,
All the emotions and affections of my heart died too ;
In faith I still am hers, no second love e're won
A thought from me, impossible as it may seem

To some, by whom the dead too quickly are forgotten.
I have her portrait and my own, and the sweet,
Melancholy lines she penned
Thinking on me—they will go with me to the grave :
In justice to her you shall hear, not see them ;
'Tis her writing, and I would not other eyes
Should gaze on it, 'twas given to me, to me alone ;
Also to me alone was given to know
How precious was the treasure of a heart
I might have owned, did own, and broke.
Listen, the words are music, the only music to my ear :
“ His portrait, my own loved one, loved in vain ;
“ Oh ! how reproachfully those lustrous eyes meet mine,
“ Yet have I not deserved it ; to have spared him pain
“ I would have suffered, tenfold more
“ Than I have suffered. 'Tis a fearful grief
“ To gaze thus earnestly upon these lineaments
“ So fondly traced upon my heart, and know
“ That they are saddened by distrust of me

“ Who so presumptuously thought to be a blessing.
“ Loved one ! no word of mine could now
“ Have influence to remove from off your heart
“ A weight that you must ever bear alone.
“ But for my own sake I bear testimony,
“ That never since my promise given to you
“ Has my heart swerved, nor could it
“ Though the whole world laid at its feet :
“ Faithful and true, yours now, yours ever.”


My tale is told, memories come rushing
Thick and fast as the strewn leaves in Autumn ;
I am too deeply moved by the remembrance.
See my white hair, my trembling step,
My figure bent and old ; nearly the only name
I have is, “ the Old Man,” but in years
I scarcely number fifty ; it is sorrow,
Deep and unutterable grief, and self-reproach,
Have made me what I am. A warning take,
Beware of whispering tongues, believe them not.
Farewell !



“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—
Heb. i. 14.



SERMON I.


 INGED messengers accredited by heaven,
 In olden times, in human form were sent
 On especial errands, by the Triune God,
 For mercy, warning, or for punishment.

Three Angels unto Abraham were sent,
 Men in their outward bearing, yet he *felt*
 There was a grace and dignity sublime
 He noted not in others, and he knelt,

And begged that they would stay, not pass him by,
 Unworthy though he was to be their host;
 They yielded, and to him the promise gave,
 Which were we now without, the world were lost.

SERMON II.

THE Angel Gabriel to Mary came ;
I often wonder if it too was he
Whose countenance of light and garb of snow,
'Twas Mary's happiness again to see ;

When rolling back the pond'rous stone, he sat
A wing the keepers, pale with sudden fear,
Yet comforting the women, " Fear not ye
" Seeking for Jesus," but, " He is not here."

Past the intense, unutterable woe,
Borne without murm'ring in Gethsemane,
Disciples slept, yet in that fearful hour
An Angel came, soothing his agony.



SERMON III.

THEY wait upon us daily—hourly wait
Upon th' adopted children of our God,
From infancy's first tott'ring footsteps, till
We lay our careworn frames beneath the sod.

Why we are honored thus, enquire not now,
Enough for us devoutly to receive
The written Word ; *Brethren* we are, and
Servants they, though wondering we believe.

Under the olden dispensation, oft
Of service rendered to the just we read :
To righteous Lot, to Daniel when oppressed,
Jacob, and others in their utmost need.



SERMON IV.

AND is their heav'nly aid from us withdrawn,
Can we cope singly with the ills of life?
Our strength but mortal, can it be that we
Alone must bear the overwhelming strife

Of good and evil,—stretched upon the rack
Of our own passions,—then left helpless there,
To writhe, complain, and suffer to the full
What we deserve, yet shrink from crying, “spare?”

Perish the thought! washed in our Saviour's blood,
Our spiritual birthright 'tis to find
A guardian Angel ever on the watch,
Who vigil keeps and sees where we are blind.

Peter was sleeping bound with heavy chains,
An Angel's voice aroused him,—from his arm
The fetters drop—he scarce the truth believes—
“The Lord hath sent,” and he is safe from harm.

Paul, tempest-tost and helpless on the waste
Of waters, sun and stars their aid withdrawn,
From Heav'n assurance came that he and crew
Were safe, when they had seemed the most forlorn.

Not to Paul only God thus opes His heart,
The sceptre of His providence He wields
E'en now, and by His ministering hosts
From death the trembling mariner He shields.

In times gone by, perhaps forgotten now,
When most unlooked for, on an Angel's wing
Deliv'rance came from danger imminent,—
Oh! undervalue not so sweet a thing.

And let us too remember that in Heav'n

Angels rejoice when Satan's bands we burst ;

And they proclaim aloud, " The lost is found,

" The dead alive, the saved who once was cursed."

" The Reapers are the Angels," happy thought !

With care they gather us, and in our ears

Sweet words of comfort whisper,—blest is he

The rustling of their airy wings who hears.

A few words more : Oh ! let us not pass by

Saint Paul's injunction, and forgetful be

Of strangers, for perchance, we cannot tell,

An Angel claims our hospitality.

And ever beautiful the feet of those

Who bring the tidings of the Gospel home

With pow'r into our hearts, on us they lay

A weight of gratitude before unknown.

Yet what a pleasing weight, how thankfully,
 Hopefully we increase it, asking more ;
To the same fountain oft again return,
 And never without adding to our store.

A double blessing now I ask of God
 Upon the sacred ministry of one,
Through whom my soul to Jesu's feet is brought ;
 An " Angel's mission" surely he hath done.

These verses were suggested by four Sermons on " The Ministry of the Angels," by the Reverend G. T. M., and are as nearly assimilated to them in sentiment and language as possible.

To the Author of these Sermons they are respectfully and gratefully dedicated by

E. M. P——s.





THE LAMP.



A SUMMER eve it was, the lamp just lit,
 I took a seat to watch the clouds fly by ;
 And ever and anon they seemed to flit
 Chased by the wind ; and then in quiet lie.

And as I watched a cloud that hung aloft,
 It seemed lit up by such a lurid glare ;
 At first the red was fierce, then dull, then soft,
 And much I wondered how the light came there.

I moved and it was gone, the cloud was there,
 Heavy and leaden as it was at first,
 With no red light ; again I took my chair,
 The angry hue returned, looking accursed.

Was it an evil omen meant for me,
That I by standing danger might avoid,
But idly resting peril could not see?
Would death come suddenly when unemployed?

My thoughts turned inwards and I noted not,
A moment 'mongst the guests : one came to me,
And speaking, paused upon the very spot,
Betwixt me and the lamp ; 'twas strange to see

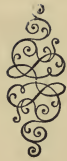
The light die out and all again be dark,
And yet not all, the mystery was cleared,
'Twas simply solved ; the lamp had thrown a spark,
The glass reflected it, and thus appeared

The threat'ning cloud. And as the lamp sent up
A lurid glare to heav'n, so do our sins
For vengeance cry aloud ; a bitter cup
Our right, but Justice dies, Mercy begins.

A "Friend" comes forward, one of gentle mien,
Betwixt our sins and heaven He takes His stand,
And then our guilt as it had never been
Dies quickly out, purged by His loving hand.


Thinking on this I kneel to Him and pray ;
His name too sacred to be written here,
All know it, therefore thankfully we'll say,
"With such a shield, we've nothing left to fear."





THE WEARY HOUR.



 AM so tired and feel so weary,
 My aching limbs I scarce can bear ;
 Life seems to me so very dreary,
 I would escape its wear and tear ;
 Yet whither go ?

Hopeless and heart-sick, fainting and slow,
 What good shall my life do to me ?
 It were better at once to lie low,
 Far better at once to be free ;
 Think you not so ?

The burden is become too heavy,
Yet 'tis not often I complain ;
Comfort I'm powerless to levy,
My tears are like large drops of rain,
Falling so slow.

To friends my plaints would wearisome be ;
I make my appeal unto those,
Whose long list of griefs is to me
An earnest that they, at life's close,
Would thankful go.

Yet thoughtless it is when so many
Have sufferings severer to bear,
To come with my sadness to any
Already o'erburdened with care,
Whose tears now flow.

Let the dark cloud low'r only on me,
With patience my strength will return ;
Now the thorn-wreath is all I can see,
By to-morrow I shall discern
The flow'rs that grow.


But now I bow my head and sighing,
To weariness yield up the palm ;
I strive no longer, combat flying,
How nerveless, fainting, silent, calm,
The weary know.





A COUNTRY CHURCH.




 LOVE this little quiet church,
 It speaks to me of holy things;
 I seem to leave the world behind,
 And soar aloft on Angel wings.

The summer breezes bring to me
 A whispering of sweetest sounds;
 Contented, happy, calm am I,
 Within these consecrated bounds.

I seem to hear the pleading voice
 Of him who labors day by day,
 Seeking his people to restrain,
 And lead in the appointed way.

How much of weariness he feels

It is not giv'n to me to know ;

A fainting heart I fear too oft

Beneath his smile lies deep below.

Think when he sees his loved ones err,

And all his flock are dear to him ;

Sometimes the dearest pain him most,

And then his cup fills to the brim,

Piled up with sorrow ; for he feels,

If thus the hopeful go astray,

How shall he bring those wand'ers home,

Who scorn and hate the narrow way.

And keenly too no doubt he feels

Th' indifference he cannot move ;

The deaf in heart, the blind in soul,

Not stirred by threatenings or love.

He seems to labor on in vain,
As day by day glides swiftly by,
Bearing from his beseeching care
Souls destined for Eternity.

And whither will they go? Ah! me,
How little we can comprehend
Of all our ministers endure,
And what if sometimes they offend?

They toil for us, and surely we
Owe reverence and love to them ;
The shepherd by his flock should be
Beloved, and let none condemn.

To me they ever seem to stand
A shield and guard sent from above,
To fence us round from enemies,
By Him who is the God of love.

Regretfully I turn to leave

 This quiet church ; its simple spire
Points heavenward and friends are there ;
 I feel as I should never tire

Of resting here ; but I must on,

 And leave these little knolls of earth ;
To speculations wide and vast
 The very sight of them gives birth.

The Pastor's voice no longer speaks

 To them of hope, or joy, or love ;
Though doubtless when he pauses here,
 His thoughts take wing and mount above.

And by that faith which pierces through

 The mists and clouds which round us low'r,
Many a well-known face he sees :
 How changed since the awe-struck death-hour !

The pallid hue, the toiling breath,
The failing pulse, the aching brow ;
Amongst that bright and blessed throng,
No signs of suffering are there now.

Oh ! may the Pastor's labors here
Be blest to those who still survive ;
And may his holy aims succeed,
His failings die, his goodness live.

But I must tear myself away,
A "straying sheep" indeed am I :
A Christian farewell to ye all,
I am a simple "passer-by."





TWILIGHT.



WHO loves the gentle twilight hour,
 When fast decaying day
 Yields gracefully his diadem,
 As fades the light away :

And Night with a benignant mien
 Her soft'ning mantle throws ;
 As over hill and valley now
 The deep'ning twilight glows ?

I see a face that loves it *not*,
 A stern, worn face it is ;
 I fear that I must also say,
 A wicked face is his.

His life has reached the twilight hour,
He shudders to recall
Its noon or morning; well he knows
The wreaths that round them fall.

Of darkest flow'rs he twined them then
With an unsparing hand;
And now their drooping heads reveal
The ugly barren strand.

How can we mourn, his hopes are wrecked?
He never wished for good;
His hardened selfish heart has ne'er
One evil thought withstood.

His wife has withered through the blight
His conduct o'er her threw;
His children—oh! that they had died
In early morning dew.

His sons are what their father was,
 No comfort comes from them ;
His daughters shun him, and for this,
 Some praise but some condemn.

He sits a solitary man,
 And welcomes not the hour
When o'er him memory stealing
 Comes with such fearful pow'r.

He orders candles, and the light
 Fresh courage gives to him :
We sighing take our leave, alas !
 When life's torch waxes dim.

And now the deep'ning shadows fall
 Upon a lady's face ;
She has a lovely, blooming look,
 And a sweet, quiet grace.

Most winningly she takes her seat
Close by her father's side :
The old man sighs as he recalls
Her mother e're she died.

To them the twilight sweeter is
Than any other time ;
The father in his daughter sees
His wife, lost in her prime.

And on that daughter's spirit fall
The gushings of deep thought ;
With whisp'rings from that unseen world,
Which come to us unsought.

When hov'ring between light and dark,
Passing from life to death,
Our inner being wakes and holds
Communion without breath.

A wordless, voiceless sympathy,
Comes with resistless pow'r,
And stirs the fount from whence arise
The murm'rings of the hour.

The sweet young face droops gently down,
Her hand is on his knee ;
We leave them, they are happy now,
So may they ever be.

The falling night no terror has
Where guilt has found no place ;
It is the burdened conscience fears
The twilight hour to face.

The sorrowful are happy when
They feel its soft'ning light ;
The weary rest with double ease
Anticipating night.

The spirits of the dead come back,
The dark hair and the grey ;
The loved of youth remembered now
As in our brightest day.

Ye who have wronged them shun the hour
When they revisit earth ;
For fearful is their pow'r when they
Come once more to our hearth.

And if on their pale face we see
A look of anguish deep,
And know we helped to place it there,
The thought will banish sleep.

It is not that they suffer now,
But that we ever see
Our loved ones as they were in life
To all eternity.

And we should study *now* to keep
The weight from off their heart ;
And never blight their happiness
By an unworthy part.

They die—but dying leave to us
A punishment severe ;
A rankling arrow in the heart
Never extracted here.

“ Come back, pale spirit, to this earth
“ I will repair the wrong.”
“ Thou canst not,” floats upon the air,
“ Undo what once is done.”

And *then* despair falls on the heart,
We wrestle in its grasp ;
“ Stay by us, Shade of Light, oh ! stay
“ And leave us not,” we gasp.

But fearful as the final doom,
 To our 'tranced, list'ning ear,
A shadowy essence whispers us
 And we distinctly hear

The awful words, " Too late, too late."
 What a hard truth to learn !
The outstretch'd arm falls nerveless now,
 Our tears they seem to burn.

The scalding tears of vain regret,
 That drain the sap of life,
Fall slowly drop by drop and show
 How keen the inward strife.

We gently wipe them from our eyes,
 We dare not leave a trace ;
No one on earth shall ever know
 The vision we must face.

Each ev'ning as the light grows dim
The shade falls on our heart ;
We summon the invisible
And take our destined part.

If our own life could forfeit be
Welcome the sacrifice :
Would that it could illumine the eye
Or warm the heart of ice.

No blush upon the pallid cheek
Can we ere hope to bring :
Or else to know they lived again
Would rob Death of his sting.

But all these murmurings are vain,
We reap as we have sown ;
We fed the whirlwind e're it past,
O'er our own heads it's blown.

And we must meet its terrors now,
 In varied shape and hue,
And gather a rich harvest in
 Of cypress tree and yew.

Some see the tott'ring step of one
 Who sought in vain to save,
Whose grey hairs bowed by sorrow down,
 Took refuge in the grave.

Some see the look of calm reproach,
 Telling of life-long pain ;
And some the gesture of despair
 They never saw again,

Save when it comes at twilight hour,
 Their hardened heart to rack,
And then they cow'r beneath its weight,
 And try to keep it back.

Some see the Angel face of one
Who died in her bright youth,
A victim to their vanity,
Their scorn of love and truth.

And some a manly face may see,
Darkened by fell distrust ;
The shadow deepened there,—he turned
And left them in disgust.

They linger to a good old age,
But sigh to think that they,
By vanity and heartlessness,
Threw happiness away.

But there are some to whom the hour
Of twilight is most sweet ;
They welcome it with beating heart,
And deem it ever fleet.

They know their sweetest pleasure is
 To commune with the dead,
No longer lost to them as once
 Their fainting hearts had said.

In life their aim had ever been
 To comfort them and love ;
And now sweet peace unfolds her wings,
 Descending from above.

The loved of earth return again,
 Their faces I have seen,
The intervening time dies out
 As it had never been.

And memory replaces those
 Whose vacant seats I see,
Not one is missing from the group,
 In they glide silently.

To me a company most dear,
And beyond reach of change,
Not one of all my fireside guests
Will e're grow cold and strange.

I hold them with a tight'ning grasp,
That strengthens day by day,—
I welcome them with bursting heart
As the sun's rays decay.

The twilight hour is dear to me,
More so than I can tell,
It strikes a chord within my heart
That rings clear as a bell ;

And vibrates till I seem to hear
A harmony long lost,
The accents I most loved float by,
My inmost soul is tossed.

But earth holds not within its bounds
A mystery more dear,
Though with it comes a longing wish
To have it all made clear.

How far imagination lends
Her magic to the hour ;
How high our soul can lift her wings,
How limited her power.

Whether the visions that we see
Are mock'ries to the sight,
Assuming a reality,
Clothed by the falling night.

Whether those hushed mysterious sounds
Do really strike the ear ;
Or if we conjure them from depths
Beyond this earthly sphere.

In vain we speculate on these
And many other things,
That to our mind but half-divine
The evening twilight brings.

But see, the clouds have touched the earth,
And fallen like a spell
Upon my heart and pen, so now,
Sweet twilight hour, farewell !





WORDS OF STRIFE.



NEVER utter words of strife,
 Let them pass away ;
 Poison not the air we breathe,
 Darken not the day.

When they on the spirit fall,
 Sad it is to see
 How in answer to the call
 Comes calamity.

Oft-repeated, harmless then
 Some will deem they are ;
 Thinking that the use thereof
 Weareth off the jar.

But if they too oft are used,
Losing their effect,
Little recked of and despised,
Treated with neglect,

Hard grows the heart that hears them,
As the rock at sea,
Over which the surges sweep
To all eternity.

But the utterer will rue,
In his heart and soul ;
Fearful inroads on his peace,
An ever-burning coal.

If thou hast the power to wound,
Stay, oh ! stay the word ;
Send not forth the poisoned dart,
Let it not be heard.

Lest returning back to thee,
It should settle there ;
Working woe and misery,
And a fell despair.

Think not to wound those beloved,
And not suff'ring see ;
Ev'ry pang which they endure
Vibrateth in thee.

Lay not up a future store
Of undying pain ;
What if the bright eye should look
In its turn disdain ?

And the tongue with hasty spleen,
Borrowed from thine own,
Mingle words of sharp retort,
With a bitter tone ?

Yet if to another's lip
 Thou present the cup,
Murmur not that they in turn
 Make thee drink it up ;

Draining to the very dregs
 Of the bitter draught
Thou hadst made and given them,
 In subtlety and craft.

If the time should never come
 To remove the wrong,
We must pay the penalty—
 It may be lifelong.

Pause before you utt'rance give
 To fierce words of strife ;
Better suffer wrong awhile,
 Than embitter life ;

As harsh tones must ever do,
Grating on the ear
With discordant sound that comes
From a lower sphere.

Check them, stifle, and discard
Aught that gives them birth ;
Take the kindly, better part,
Of the meek on earth.

Never utter words of strife,
Let them pass away ;
Poison not the air we breathe,
Darken not the day.





CHANGE.



HOW shall I tell what I have seen
 That makes me shun the word?

It quickens my heart's pulses now,
 Fluttering like a bird

That beats against its prison bars
 And hurts its tender wing,
 Only the thought of what is past
 Does such keen anguish bring.

Some say we only once can love,—
 It was not so with me,
 Nor was the first the most beloved
 As some say it must be.

I loved her, it is true, nor thought
That in my heart, deep down,
Lay chords which could be reach'd and struck
By one loved hand alone—

And that not hers. Lizzie was then
My dearest, only thought,
And that our lives should be as one
Was the blest lot I sought.

Another wooed her for his bride,
He sat on a pale horse,—
He did not sue in vain,—she lay
In his cold arms a corse.

This was the first sad change I knew,—
I would that it had been
The last,—I gladly would have died
To 'scape what I have seen.

To me at first life seemed a blank,
And now as I look back,
With tenderness I think of her,
And mem'ry's gardens rack.

They yield me only flow'rs : with her
No painful thoughts combine—
Death took her, but yet left to me
The portion most divine.

The tear I ever give to her
Eases my heart again,
'Tis like the early morning dew,
Or the sweet summer rain.

But now upon my heart there falls
Remembrance of a love,
Which I once thought no storm could shake,
Or tempest ever move.

It is uprooted now, though this
E'en I can scarce believe,
And o'er its ashes low I bend,
For inwardly I grieve.

The vacant chamber in my heart,
I strive to close the door,
I would it never opened now,
Fast shut for evermore.

But there are times when it lights up
And shows its nothingness,—
Silence oppressive—aching void—
A tomb left tenantless.

Hark! a low wailing now I hear
Come moaning on the wind,
With shudd'ring and foreboding heart
Myself alone I find.

Sole tenant of that drear abode,
It seems like one vast sigh,
So sadd'ning is the influence
Of mem'ry rushing by.

An instrument now long unused
Neglected lieth there,
Love once with firmness struck the chords,
Now no one lives who dare.

Shall she, the once lov'd tenant come
And harmony produce?
She could not if she would, the strings
Are broken now or loose.

Mary, how was it that all changed?
I seem as I forgot,—
I call to thee because I know
My voice thou hearest not.

For if I thought that it could reach
 And strike upon thine ear,
I would suppress it or else speak
 In accents cold and clear.

Aye, cold as those in which thou said'st :
 “ 'Twould better be for both
“ That we should part ! ” I saw it then,
 That thou wert nothing loth.

“ Better for both, ” — those were the words,
 Methinks I hear them now,
And feel within my heart the stab,
 The cold damp on my brow.

The fountain of my life dried up,
 There was no fresh supply,
The color faded from my cheek,
 The brightness from my eye.

And pity came into thine heart,
Where all had been as stone,
Thou murmuredst the word, "Forgive,"
My weakness then was gone.

I was a man not meant to be
The puppet of an hour,
I struggled with my agony,
Subduing it with power.

Forgiveness I could not accord,
My love was much too deep ;
It was not that I malice bore,
Or wished to make thee weep ;

But all my tenderness was gone
In that dread changing hour,
I turned as cold and merciless
As any priest in power.

My outward mien but little showed
The fire that burned within,
In ashes lay my visions sweet
That once so bright had been.

And now they're cold upon the hearth,
With light enough to show
What kindly warmth there still would be
Could they with red heat glow.

But the cold winter wind that bites
' The cattle on the lea ;
The ice that makes our river Thame
As one vast frozen sea ;

Thine own heart, once beloved, now lost,
Not colder is than mine,—
Thou hast the sought-for wealth, may it
And happiness combine.

I too have gold, and wife, and child,
No longer I complain,
'Tis when they speak of change I feel
My life come o'er again.

And with it comes the bitter pang,
So well remembered now,
The root and spring of bitterness
Whence Marah's waters flow.

The summer wind that fans my cheek
Soon turns to winter cold ;
The sea that whispers on the beach
Engulfs the brave and bold ;

The fire, to which we gladly turn,
A fearful master is ;
And if to Love we yield ourselves,
Dire slavery is his.

We have fought a desp'rate battle,
And I am victor now,
But bright red drops are on the leaves
That rest upon my brow.

Change in the future has no power,
No trouble now can last,
The shadow of my life lies deep
In the changing, dreary past.



FAREWELL.



A WORD comes ringing on the midnight air,
 With sound distinct, clear, sharp and terrible:
 How many a pale and upturned face is there,
 That wakens with a start and seems to see
 Once more the look of unheard, mute appeal.
 Oh! cruel word, crushing from out our hearts
 The very spring and joy of our hard life!
 The rosy cheek turns pale, the bright eye dim,
 The dark hair silver, and the silver grey,
 Th' elastic step we scarcely erst could hear
 Becomes a heavy footfall, at thy bidding;
 All outward symptoms of the dreary blight
 That thou so well canst spread; making the plain
 That once was fertile, and well decked with flow'rs,

One vast Sahara. Ah! if the many tears
Which thou hast forced from hot and aching eyes,
Scorching and blistering in their downward course,
If these to ice could turn and then become
Collected to one spot, what berg that blocks
And chokes the Northern Sea, could equal thine?
In the murm'ring of the ever-changing sea,
In the hoarse voices of the threat'ning gale,
In the dead silence of the midnight hour,
And when around me is the strife of tongues;
Louder than any sound material,
Softer than sweetest harmony of earth,
And deeper in the heart than silence drear,
Dwells the sad echo of a last "Farewell!"
No matter that the lips have left unspoken
What the sad heart foreboding, hears unsaid.
The eye, the window of the heart, what's there?
The blanching cheek, from which with iron heel
The life blood has been crushed, what says it?

The quiv'ring lip, that has no power to stay
Its trembling, but is palsied for the time,
Yet speaks with eloquence unequalled, and
By us, with coronals of tears is crowned.
A diadem of pain is ever on the brow
Of those whose hearts have cower'd beneath the weight
Of that discordant word; with all our sympathies
At variance ever. A living death!
More bitter than the tolling of the bell,
Far sadder than the requiem o'er the dead,
More to be dreaded than the hurricane
That levels all before it.

With care I rear'd

A beauteous flower; it was too tender far
For this cold earth, it blossomed, drooped and died:
Its name was Heart's-ease, and the chilling blast
That o'er it swept, and by its influence malign
Laid low its lovely head, said as it past,
"Farewell!" But o'er its lowly grave

There blossoms to this hour, "Forget-me-not."
And thou art not forgotten ; on mine ear
Again the echo strikes ; "Farewell ! Farewell !"



LONDON :
PRINTED BY GEORGE PHIPPS, TOTHILL STREET,
WESTMINSTER.

20, ST. GEORGE'S PLACE,
HYDE PARK CORNER.

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